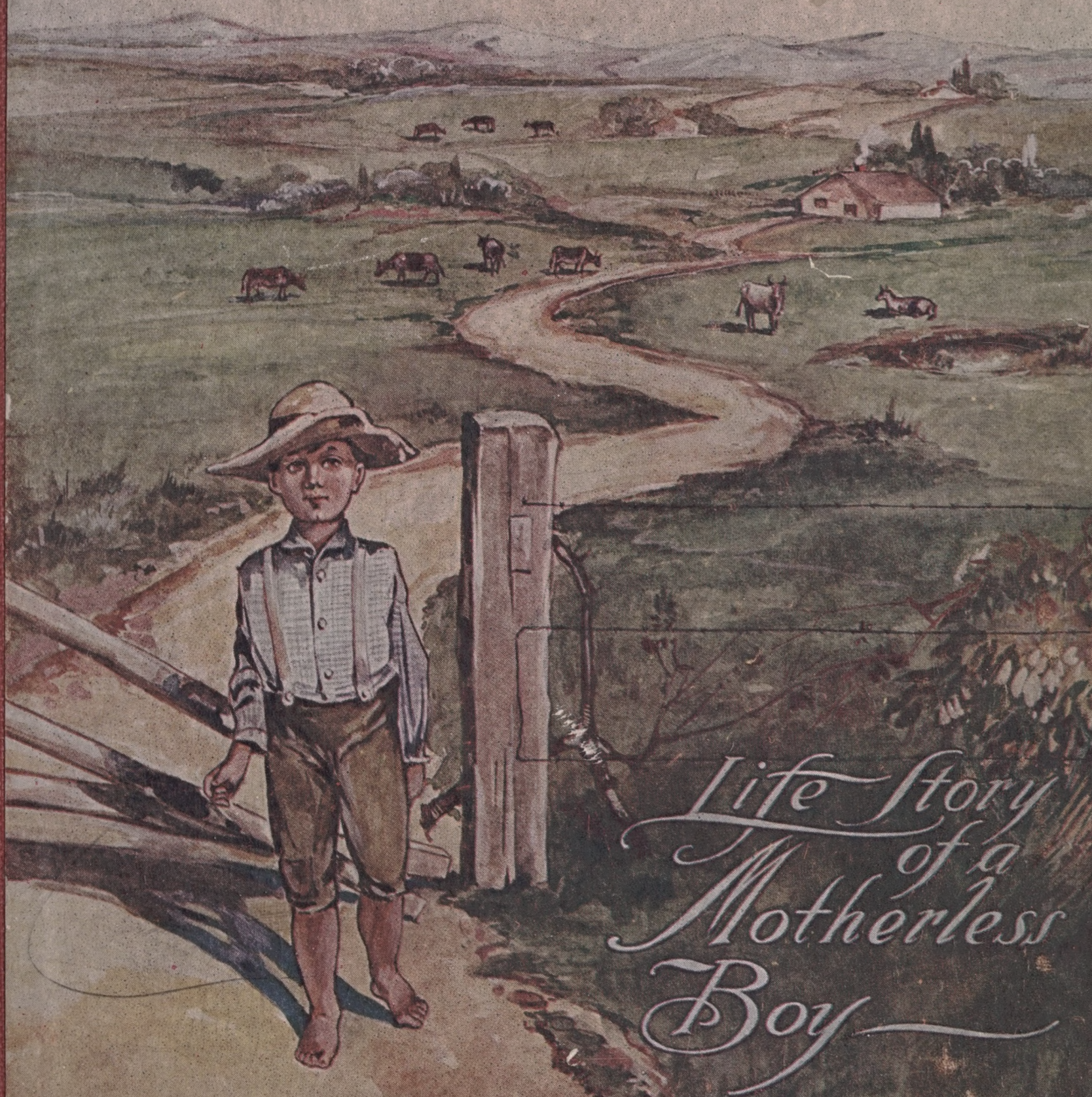


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HOW JOHN BECAME A MAN



*Life Story
of a
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JOHN AT THE AGE OF FOUR.

HOW JOHN BECAME A MAN.

Life Story of a Motherless Boy.

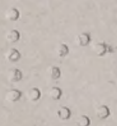
By ISABEL C. BYRUM

Author of

Beautiful Stories from the Good Old Book

Favorite Stories from the New Testament

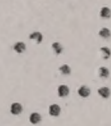
Our Darlings' A B C Book, Etc.



Published by
Gospel Trumpet Company
Anderson, Indiana
1909

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Preface.

In presenting this little volume, the author hopes that it may be useful in suggesting to the minds of young boys the great wrong there is in indulging in evil habits.

We read, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," and this is true with most boys who form habits that are harmful both to body and soul.

The story of John's life is a true one and his earnest prayer that it may be the means of keeping some boys from Satan's snares and prove a blessing to them, I trust will be answered.

ISABEL C. BYRUM.

Anderson, Ind., Oct. 8, 1909.

HOW JOHN BECAME A MAN.

Life Story of a Motherless Boy.



UT upon the prairies in one of the western states lived a little boy by the name of John. He was a dear little fellow with large brown eyes. Every one thought much of him.

Nearly all of the houses around were built of sod and mud, but John's home was a two-story frame house.

Being their only child his parents thought much of his future and were making great plans for their baby boy, for he had just passed his third birthday.

A few days after John's birthday something sad happened. His dear mother became very ill. For three days she suffered intensely and then passed away into eternity.

John's poor father was nearly broken-hearted. He had made so many plans for the

comfort and happiness of his little family, but now Death had come and broken their circle.

John could not realize what it all meant. It seemed so strange not to have Mama call him and caress him tenderly and put him to bed. Papa cried so much, too, and often said, "John, now you will have to be Papa's little man." And he said, "Mama is gone and we are to be alone all of the time. Now you must learn to pray." John did not know what it meant to pray and knew nothing about God, so his father explained that God was in heaven and that he wanted people to bow down upon their knees to him and pray.

And his father knelt down with his boy and tried to teach him to pray. But he was not a praying man and the only words he could remember were the words he had learned at his own mother's knee—

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep.
And if I should die before I wake,
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take."

John was deeply impressed by his father's words and never forgot them, but it was the

first and last time that he ever saw his father pray.

He often thought about his dear mama and wished that she could come back again, but he would also think about his father's words that he must be a little man now, and he tried very hard to be one.

His uncle did not live very far away and, it being harvest time, John was often sent to his uncle's to play with his cousins, Will and Charley.

Will was six years old and Charley only two. But Charley was a little cripple boy.

The three boys enjoyed being together so much that it was at last decided that John could go and live with his uncle. It was sad that this ever happened, for his cousin Will was a very bad boy and often taught the younger boys things that they should not have known.

John's uncle owned a great many cattle and it was the boys' work to herd them out upon the prairie. This of course did not keep the boys very busy. They only had to see that the cattle were kept out of the neighboring corn-

fields and wheat-fields, were driven to ponds for water, and brought home in the evening. The rest of the time they could play.

There is an old saying that "Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do," and he certainly found many things for these three boys.

The ponds where the cattle were watered were called "buffalo wallows." Some of these were quite deep and it rained just often enough to keep them supplied with water.

One day Will said, "Say, boys, I heard some one say that Jesus walked upon the water when he was here on earth and I'm going to walk on it, too; now see me."

Will did not realize that he was doing wrong by speaking of Jesus in this way and in making sport of his acts. Had he been sent to Sunday-school he would have learned that he must look upon the works and words of Jesus in a sacred way.

The water was quite shallow for some distance, and then it went down very suddenly and was quite deep. Will knew this and he only walked around in the shallow water. The

younger boys fully believed that he was walking upon the water.

John was by this time nearly five years old. One day he and Charley were watching the cows alone. When they came to the pond Charley said, "Now, John, I believe that we can walk on the water just as easily as Will did the other day and I am going to try." With this he ran right out into the pond. When he came to the deep place he went down at once and John knew that his cousin was in great danger. So he ran out to him.

It must have been God that protected the boys, for neither of them knew about the deep place. When John came to the edge of the hole he reached out and caught his cousin by the hair, then dragged him out of the water and saved his life.

Evil Influences.

Soon after this Will took the boys out to the cellar. This cellar was a hole dug in the ground, with mud steps leading down to it. Logs were laid across the top with brush and sod placed upon them for a roof. The cellar was made to keep the winter vegetables in, and it was also a protection in time of a cyclone. The family could run down into it and stay until the storm was over.

Will knew that tobacco was kept in the cellar, and, though he was just a young boy, he liked to chew and smoke it. Now he thought if John and Charley would only get to liking tobacco too it would be so nice.

So he said, "Look here, John, you said you wanted to be a man. Now here's your chance. If you get so that you can smoke tobacco and chew and spit tobacco juice like your father you will be a man."

Then Will found an old clay pipe, and when

it was filled with tobacco leaves and lighted John began to smoke.

He had not smoked very long until he began to feel very sick and dizzy. He wanted to get up out of the cellar, but where were the steps?

Will had to help him find the steps, but he explained that it always affected everybody like that the first few times. But that feeling would pass away and he would soon be able to smoke without feeling sick at all.

He was unable to eat any dinner, but he kept repeating to himself, "It won't be long I'll have to suffer and I will soon be a man."

How sad it was that John was so young and that he had no one to teach him the great wrong he was doing to his little body.

Had he known that the sick feeling was produced by a strong poison contained in the tobacco he might have been frightened and never touched it again.

Every pound of tobacco contains three hundred and twenty grains of this poison called nicotine. One grain of it would kill a large dog in about three minutes.

A man once took a needle and thread that had been dipped in the poison, and ran it through the skin of a frog. In a few moments the frog was dead. It acted like a drunken person, vomited, hopped about as fast as possible, and then, lying down, twitched awfully for a moment. Then it became insensible and soon was dead.

Many people become insane just through the use of tobacco, but it is little wonder when we understand how much poison it contains.

We should pity the boys more than blame them, for when they are not warned in time this poison gets into their system and it is no easy thing for them to stop the use of it, no matter how much they may wish to.

John was determined to become a man as soon as possible, so he kept on smoking and trying to accustom himself to the horrid tobacco as fast as possible.

One time when John's father came to see him he thought he could smell tobacco about his boy's clothes and felt that it would be best to talk to him.

He knew that John had many temptations

and just how to advise him he hardly knew. How much he loved and pitied his poor little motherless boy! He could not point out himself as an example, for he was a slave to tobacco.

Calling his son to one side he said, "John, I must have a talk with you. Now the tobacco habit is a very bad one. It ruins many a life. I am not going to say you can not use tobacco, because I know if I do, you will get it some way if you want it. But I do say that if you do use it, you do it against my wishes."

John was greatly touched by his father's words. But he was beginning to get a real appetite for the stuff, so he thought, "Well, I'll just keep on, but I won't let Father know about it."

The boys all liked to chew more than to smoke, as they grew older, because they did not like to have other people know what they were doing.

But the part that worried them was how to get their tobacco. It was not so hard at first, but every little while they had to increase the

quantity. They had heard about burglars and stealing and now they thought this would be a good way to get their tobacco.

Poor little John! How sad to think that he should go so deep into sin without a mother's care or advice.

His aunt was a good woman, but she did not feel the necessity of watching her own boys, and how could she care for John? She told them not to steal or tell lies and gave them much good advice, but she did not realize the great need of winning their confidence and love so that they would confide in her.

Her husband was very stern when he knew of mischief of any kind that had been done, but he did not take the time or trouble of inquiring into things.

Thus left to themselves the boys went deeper and deeper into sin. They decided to keep close watch and avail themselves of every opportunity to procure tobacco, even if it was necessary to steal it. There was nothing but tobacco that they wanted to steal, but they must have that.

They would often see some one working hard

at some kind of work. Walking up to the man they would say, "If you will give us each a chew of tobacco we will do that work for you." The man feeling thankful for the help would gladly hand them his plug of tobacco—when they were through with the work—that they might each take a bite.

The boys would each take as large a bite as they possibly could and, returning what was left of the plug to the man, would hurry away. When out of the man's sight they would take the piece from their mouths and bite off what they should have taken in the first place and still have a large piece left.

Along with the filthy habit of tobacco chewing was another evil that had found its way into their lives. That was the deception they practised and the many lies they were forced to tell in order to make everything appear all right to others.

They did not mind telling lies, because they did not realize how very sinful it was and had never heard that God hates liars. He has said, "All liars shall have their part in the lake

which burneth with fire and brimstone.” Rev. 21: 8.

Several times the boys had been quite successful in stealing tobacco, so they thought they would go farther.

John’s uncle and aunt were in the habit of going to town about once in three weeks. At such times the boys were left alone, and it afforded them an opportunity to do any mischief that they cared to do, with no one to molest them.

Thus far they had been successful in getting small amounts of tobacco. Now they were becoming a little more bold and fearless as the burglar fever grew upon them. Knowing that when they were alone was their best chance, they chose the next time their folks went to town. Then they planned to go a little farther with their stealing than ever before.

The boys knew that a large amount of tobacco was usually kept securely locked up in a big chest in the barn. Thus far they had always been afraid to try to get any from this source, but now they were becoming bolder.

They talked the matter over several times wondering how they could get at the tobacco when they did not have a key. It seemed to be a hard matter to solve.

At last John, who was now about six years old and who had been seriously thinking, spoke up and said, "Oh! I know how to get into the chest. Let's take the hinges and lock off. We can by unscrewing these screws that hold them." "Yes, that's just the thing, John," said Will, "I'm so glad you thought of it. I don't see why we didn't think of that before. That will not be just breaking the lock, but it will be about as good and we won't get caught at it so easily."

"Oh, and say, Will, if we just cut a small piece from each plug Uncle won't be so apt to miss it," said John.

"That's just the thing!" again exclaimed Will. "Why, John, do you know I think you will soon be a man? for you seem to know just how to do things. Tomorrow is the day for us to break into the chest, and we must know where the screw-driver is."

“Oh, I know,” said little Charley, “I’ll get that.”

It was quite a distance to town, and the boys were very eager to help all they could to get the folks started. A good many things seemed to go wrong, but at last all was ready and they were gone.

The boys watched the wagon disappear down the road. Now they knew that they were alone and that this was their chance to carry out their plans.

Hastening to the barn the three boys were soon kneeling upon the floor around the big chest. They were so eager to procure the tobacco that they did not think of the great wrong they were doing in order to get it.

If some one could have told them the history and downfall of thousands of other boys they would have been frightened and have ceased from their awful work at once.

They did not realize that stealing little things would always lead to greater things, and they, like so many other boys and men, might be landed in prison. In such a place their lives

would be very miserable, for they would not only have to work hard, but their food would be very poor.

Every night they would have to be locked in an iron cell, with no friends to cheer them. Their only companions would be criminals and men of the very worst character.

Prison life was unheard of to them, so their thoughts were not there just now. They were eager to get the tobacco, so worked away with the screw-driver.

It did not take the boys long to break into the chest, take a thin slice from each piece of tobacco and then replace the lid. So they were encouraged to do more.

They knew that upstairs was a trunk where two revolvers were kept. What fun it would be to break into that trunk and get those revolvers out to look at! They decided to try it and again John suggested the way to open the trunk.

“Just take a nail and see if you can’t turn it in the lock,” he said to Will. The trunk was quite old and the lock worked easily, so the boys

soon had it open and there lay the revolvers before them.

John and Will each took one. John's was an ordinary revolver, but Will's was a double-action. He had not played with it long until he saw that there was one load in it. But thinking there was no danger he began to snap it at John.

John knew about the load and said, "Will, don't snap that at me; it might go off!"

Will paid no attention, but kept on snapping the revolver.

John was standing behind a barrel of carpet rags. He saw that his cousin did not heed his words, and, feeling somehow that he was in danger, he dodged down behind the barrel.

Just as he did this the load went off and the bullet went into an old trunk just behind him.

Will was very much frightened when he saw what might have happened had his cousin remained where he had been a moment before.

In fact they all felt queer and said that it was time to put the revolvers away. This they did and ran down to attend to the cows.

Poor boys! What a pity that they could not realize that just now their conscience was trying to warn them of their danger in doing things that were wrong, such as stealing, deceiving, etc., and to incline their hearts in the right way! God was speaking to them through their consciences and had they listened they would have been spared much trouble in the future.

As it was, they tried to enjoy the tobacco that they had stolen and then, when it was gone, to plan how they could get some more.

One day as they were walking along they saw a piece of tobacco that some one had spit out of his mouth. It was only partly chewed, but there it lay in the dirt and none of them knew in whose mouth it had been.

At first they could not touch it and passed on, but oh, they did want some so much! At last Will said, "See here, boys, I believe I will get that piece and wash it good down here in the pond and it won't be so bad." Then he hurried back and got the nasty stuff.

Chewing tobacco is certainly a filthy habit.

The Bible says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

If only these boys could have understood what this meant. But no one around them knew what the Bible taught, for they would not read it. And nearly everybody used tobacco. No one was considered manly that did not use it.

Surely the use of tobacco is an evil. God never intended it to go into the mouth of a man or woman, much less into the mouth of a child.

There is a large green worm that eats the tobacco plant and that grows fat upon it. It is food for this worm and God pronounced it very good in its place. It only becomes filthy and offensive when used by man and can not be termed food.

But let us follow John. His father could see the evil surroundings of his child. And he was not getting any education. His father pitied him and began to make plans to send him to school. At the age of eight he was taken to live with his father, and started to school.

The terms were very short—only three or four months in the winter—but John was very

practical and learned easily. His teachers all liked and pitied him and were anxious to do all they could to help him get an education.

In return he tried not to be mischievous, although sometimes he would break the rules and have to be punished. But John tried to be a good boy in school.

In some ways things were worse for John at his father's than they had been at his uncle's. His father had bachelor friends, many of whom took a great fancy to John. They thought he was so bright for his age and many things he had not learned at his uncle's he learned from them.

They told him that it was manly to drink beer. When he tasted it and said it was not good they told him he could learn to like it if he tried. So John cultivated an appetite for beer and could soon drink a large quantity.

About this time John's father began to pay attention to a young lady. John did not like to be left alone at night, so his father would promise to be back early. But nine, ten and often eleven o'clock would come before his return.

At first John could hardly stand it to be left all alone with no one to talk to and he often cried himself to sleep. But as it continued he became used to it and tried not to care.

He had two little pet turkeys that his aunt had given him, and as they were about all the companions he had now he really loved them. They had one little place to roost that no one knew of but himself. He loved to pet and handle them, for somehow it made the hours move along faster.

Oh, how often he thought now of his dear mother! Sometimes he would get just as close to his father as he could (and his father was very kind), but it was his mother's tender love and touch that his heart was craving.

He remembered every little kind word and look that his aunt had given him and wondered if it was like his mother's would have been. His little heart was longing—longing—but he tried to be brave.

One evening his father took him to the house of a bachelor friend to spend the evening. A number of other men were there, too, to spend

the time in card playing. The men were greatly interested in John. They taught him to play cards and gave him so much beer to drink that he could hardly keep awake. They were in the habit of letting the one who won the game of cards drink the beer or whiskey. The others could only smell the bottle.

Sometimes smelling the bottle would not satisfy. At such times they would draw cuts to see who would go and steal some chickens to roast for the rest.

John was very sleepy, but he heard them decide who should go that night. Then he heard something else—some one said, “Say, boys, those two turkeys of John’s would taste fine. Let’s get them.”

John was just about to say something when he thought of their roosting place. He felt quite sure they could not find it, and so said nothing.

But that they should think of taking his pets hurt him. Life had a hard and bitter side for John; but he always tried to make the best of it.

They stayed all night at the home of their

friend, and in the morning when John awoke he thought about his turkeys. As soon as he could he hurried home and found that they were safe and waiting for their breakfast.

After a while his father was married and now John was to have another experience. He wondered if in any way his stepmother would be like the dear loving mother he had so often thought about.

She was kind, but, like his aunt, she failed to win his confidence. Then his father did not have so much time to talk to him and he became more lonely.

That winter John's stepmother's brother Ed came to live with them. It was too bad, for he was older and a far worse companion than his cousin Will had been.

Ed's father and mother had both used tobacco a long time before he was born. And the appetite was in their child from the very first. He cried so much and nothing seemed to satisfy him. One day his mother tied some tobacco up in a rag and gave it to her baby. It was just what he wanted and he stopped crying at once.

There is a verse in the Bible that says God is abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But that he will by no means clear the guilty. For he visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Think of it! Parents may be sorry for their sins, and be forgiven their transgressions, but their children must suffer and inherit appetites and diseases that are unnatural, even to the fourth generation. Oh what a responsibility is resting upon parents!

As Ed grew his appetite for tobacco increased. He spent every cent he could get for tobacco and denied himself many of the necessary things of life that he should have had.

At one time when he visited a neighboring town he stole a case of plug tobacco and brought it home. This supplied himself as well as John for quite a while. But it was gone too soon to suit them.

John was about thirteen by this time. His stepmother and her people were all great people to dance, and they taught John.

It did not take him long to learn, and he soon enjoyed it as well as any of them. There seemed to be something so fascinating about the dance. Then it seemed to help the aching place in his heart.

Home was not home to him in its true sense. He was at an age when he was becoming reckless. He hardly knew his own mind, but he felt that if he could get away from home it might be better. None seemed to understand or love him as he thought they ought..

About this time his uncle and family came to spend the winter with them. The change pleased John in a way, for he could have Will for a companion again.

The two boys were glad to get together, and began at once to plan how to spend their evenings. It was decided that they should sleep in the cellar, as the family was so large now. This gave them an opportunity to do just about as they pleased.

They had a good many talks about bygone days, and Will laughed about John's great desire to become a man and wondered how he felt about it now.

John answered that he was tired of home and was almost discouraged; that he had almost a mind to run away from home; and that if it wasn't for his father he would. He said that he didn't see that being a man was so wonderful, after all, for all the men he knew were so bad.

Will didn't have any sympathy to offer. So he proposed that they play cards when they had nothing else to do.

But the next thing was, where could they get the cards? John, as usual, was the one to suggest a way.

"Why, Will, we can make them. I'll get some stiff cardboard and cut them out while you mark them."

"That's all right," said Will, "but we can't work in the dark. Where can we get a light?"

"Oh, that will be easy enough," he said. "we can get some lard in a dish and put a rag in it

to light. That won't be a very good light, but it will answer."

The cards were soon done and many evening were spent in playing with them. They got so that they could play so well that neither one could beat unless they cheated. So they tried every way they could think of to get the best of each other.

Then they began to bet. They would put up anything they could find as a reward. Thus they learned to gamble, and spent many of the winter evenings in this way and attending dances.

Card playing is very dangerous for any one, and especially for children. They become so interested and carried away with the game that they soon lose all desire for good reading and for the things that would be a help to them. Just as John and Will were led to gamble and cheat by playing cards, so will many others be inclined who waste their time in this way.

Away from Home.

When spring came John had his mind made up to leave home. Shortly after his uncle returned home he went to his father and told him that he was going.

His father felt very bad and advised his boy to stay at home. "But," said he, "if you are determined to go I will not hinder you. Only try and do as nearly right as you can."

John had commenced working out when about eleven years old, and in these two years he had become acquainted with a good many boys.

Some of these boys were very wild and rough and they filled John's mind with a desire to do some great thing and become rich. He already had some great ambitions in this direction, but had never been able to save any money. His tobacco cost so much and then his beer bills and even whiskey bills were growing. Altogether they amounted to many dollars a year.

John had noticed that Ed had often drunk whiskey to satisfy the awful craving that the

tobacco poison had created in his system. Then he had tried the same and it was becoming a necessity to him also, just as much as tobacco was and had been.

What a pity it was that John did not stop and think that he could never become rich as long as he had all of these expenses to meet.

It happened that one day the man for whom John worked sent him under the charge of another man to work for an old farmer.

They went in time for breakfast, and when the meal was ended the farmer arose and said, "We always have reading immediately after breakfast and we like to have our help come in." He then arose and went into another room.

John was seized with a terrible fear. Until then he had never heard a prayer offered except the time his father prayed with him shortly after his mother's death.

He knew about the Bible, but all he had ever seen was a small testament of his mother's. He had never read in it except once or twice when he was badly hurt. Some one said that the

reading of a certain verse would cure the toothache and another would stop the nosebleed. He had tried both of these.

John thought he would not stay in for worship and hurried out to the barn with the other man.

When they were about to enter the barn the farmer called to them, saying, "We always like to have our help come in with us." As the farmer returned into the house they saw that there was no other way; so they came back and sat down with the family for worship.

Then John really suffered. It was such a new experience for him and he did not know how to act. He watched the farmer's children very closely that he might know just what to do, but he failed to hear anything that was read.

When the reading was over the farmer said, "Let us pray," and all knelt down by their chairs but John, and he did not know what to do.

After a few minutes he slipped down by his chair, too, but he felt ashamed. He could not listen to the prayer but he heard the words,

“Dear Lord, bless the help today and keep them from accident and danger.”

He glanced hurriedly around and saw the children peeping between their fingers, and he hastened to put his hands up to his face and gave a quick glance at Mr. A., his boss.

He was kneeling at his chair, but was picking his teeth and looking out of the window. Just then the farmer said amen and they all arose.

John was truly glad to get outside once more, but he kept thinking, “Oh, what a dunce I made of myself! Why didn’t I act unconcerned, like Mr. A.?”

Then the thought flashed through his mind about the few words he had heard the farmer say, and he thought, “We surely will have a good day today.”

Now John was not a bad boy naturally. He had never heard that there was a God in heaven or anything of the dear Savior’s love. He did not know what sin was, only in a very crude sense. So we can not wonder at his feelings.

About the time that he was fourteen years

old he became very much interested in becoming a showman.

A show had passed through that part of the country and he had attended. From that time he began to think how nice it would be to travel about with them and see the country.

The appearance of the clown impressed him most and he often thought how nice it would be to be among them.

For about a year he thought of little else, and, knowing that they were to return the following year, he decided to run away with them.

He did as he had planned and went with the expectation of becoming very rich. He soon found that the life of a showman was anything but pleasant, and instead of becoming rich he lost what little money he had, and was taken very ill.

Thoroughly disgusted with himself and his undertaking he returned as soon as he was able and was glad to be among his friends again.

John would have been discouraged had he looked on the dark side of his life. As it was, he tried to look on the bright side of things.

Effects of Alcohol.

Much of his time was now spent in card playing, dancing and anything to make the time pass pleasantly. Tobacco and whiskey were used freely and John was considered a good fellow by all who knew him. But it was all telling upon his health. He had a severe cough and was becoming stoop-shouldered.

The boys only thought of the good feeling that the liquor caused in their system. The alcohol in it, like the nicotine in tobacco, was an unknown evil and poison, working daily through their bodies. Neither could it ever be termed a food.

Many doctors have written about the influence of alcohol upon the system and we will give a few of their statements:

“Alcohol is a stimulant and narcotic. As a stimulant it excites the brain and nerves, increases the circulation of the blood, and intoxicates (makes drunk); while as a narcotic it blunts the powers of the brain and nerves

and produces stupor and death. Since alcohol contains no nitrogen, it lacks one of the elements of food, and consequently will not sustain life. Alcohol has no iron nor salts for the blood; no gluten, phosphorus, nor lime for the bones; and no albumen, or substance which is the basis of every living organism. Hence it can not be termed a food. Tests in the army, navy, and Arctic explorations have definitely proved the above position. Neither will alcohol allay thirst, and for the following reason: Alcohol has a great attraction for water, and when swallowed draws the water to itself, thus depriving the tissues of the body of that most necessary inorganic food. Again, alcohol causes a rush of blood to the skin, which causes a sensation of warmth to be felt upon the surface of the body. However, the sensation of heat is, like beauty, 'only skin deep,' as the heat of the system has really been diminished rather than increased; because when the blood is upon the surface, it parts with its heat more readily."

"The effects of alcohol upon the heart may be summed up in the following statements:

“(a) It causes a softening of the muscles of the heart, and a fatty degeneration, thus clogging the workings of this vital organ.

“(b) It overworks the heart.

“(c) Oftentimes it renders the heart weak and flabby.

“(d) It causes an enlargement or dilation of its parts.

“(e) There is a consequent effect of drowsiness and lassitude.

“(f) Its general effect upon the heart is to destroy its strength and usefulness.”

“Alcohol has the following effects upon the lungs:

“(a) It makes the blood impure, thus increasing the work of the lungs.

“(b) It paralyzes the blood vessels.

“(c) It weakens the various lung tissues.

“(d) It vitiates the breath.”

“Alcohol's effects upon the stomach:

“(a) Produces chronic inflammation of the stomach.

“(b) Injures the mucous lining by hardening the tissues.

“(c) It destroys some of the small glands and impairs others.

“(d) It precipitates the pepsin of the gastric juice, thus retarding digestion.

“(e) It thickens the mucus of the stomach.

“(f) The action of the stomach is at first quickened by the presence of alcohol, and then retarded.”

“The effects of alcohol upon the liver may be—

“(a) It produces a hardened condition of its tissues.

“(b) Enlarges the organ.

“(c) Compresses and lessens the cells for producing bile.

“(d) Stimulates the liver to overaction, thus reducing the bile supply.

“(e) It weakens and destroys the usefulness of this organ of digestion.”

“Effect of alcohol upon the blood and blood vessels:

“(a) It thins and coagulates the blood according to the amount of alcohol.

“(b) It hastens the circulation, thus weakening it.

“(c) It prevents combustion.

“(d) It impairs and destroys the corpuscles, thus affecting their powers of transporting oxygen and carbonic acid gas.

“(e) It weakens the arterial muscles by affecting the nerves governing them.”

“Effects of alcohol upon the brain and nerves are:

“(a) It causes apoplexy and epilepsy by confusing the brain.

“(b) It weakens the will and deadens the feelings.

“(c) It hardens the brain tissues, producing dullness, insensibility, and insanity.

“(d) It destroys the nerve fiber of the brain.

“(e) It temporarily stimulates and finally depresses this organ.

“(f) It will at last destroy man, body and soul.”

“Alcohol leads every other drug in its far-reaching influence for mischief and evil. Were the thousands of ruined homes, the untold numbers of blasted lives, the sorrows, the sins, numberless crimes, murders, and deaths brought in panoramic review before us, what a hell-born picture it would be.”

“The effect of alcohol upon the morals is awful. All delicacy, courtesy, and self-respect are gone; the sense of justice and right is faint or quite extinct; There is no vice into which the victim of drunkenness does not easily slide; and no crime from which he can be expected to refrain. Between this condition and insanity there is but a single step.”

A Great Change.

Now we are coming to the beautiful part of John's life—to the time when he became a man.

At the age of eighteen he had almost come to the point of discouragement. His health was becoming so poor that the future did not seem very promising, yet it was to be the brightest and happiest time of his life.

You will remember that John did not know anything about the goodness of the Lord, and you will also recall what an opinion he had formed of those who professed to be religious.

One evening he heard that two women were to hold a series of meetings in their part of the country, and instantly he was seized with a strong desire to go.

Being a sort of leader among his associates he soon found several boys willing to go with him. Their motive for going was simply to have a good time.

On the appointed evening they were there early and found seats as far back as possible,

that they might not attract too much attention. Everything was so strangely new to them all that they looked on in wonder.

The meeting was opened with some touching songs. Then one of the ladies prayed. And such a prayer! John thought surely that woman has a sound mind. Then followed another prayer in a sweet clear voice, and oh, such tender loving words!

When they arose from prayer they sang another song and then began the preaching. The sermon was taken from the 24th chapter of Matthew and as the truth poured forth John sat spellbound.

After the sermon the young girl arose who had offered the second prayer and told how God had won her by his Spirit and how he had satisfied every longing of her heart. How by his grace she was able to live a life that was pure and spotless, and how there had been prepared for her a home in heaven.

And she said it was possible for every one to be just as happy as she was and to have the same kind of an experience.

John heard every word, and he thought, "I

would give anything in the world if I could be like those women and have such a testimony.” He then thought of his companions and dared not look at them for fear they might notice the moisture in his eyes. Conviction of his sins was fastening itself upon his heart.

Then the meeting closed with the announcement that the meetings would continue for about three weeks, and an urgent invitation was given to all who cared to come. John decided at once that he would come to every one.

He had very little to say on the way home, for he could not get the events of the evening out of his mind. He remembered the chapter that the lady had read and as soon as he was home he hunted up his mother’s testament and read it. One verse was deeply impressed upon his mind. It read like this: “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

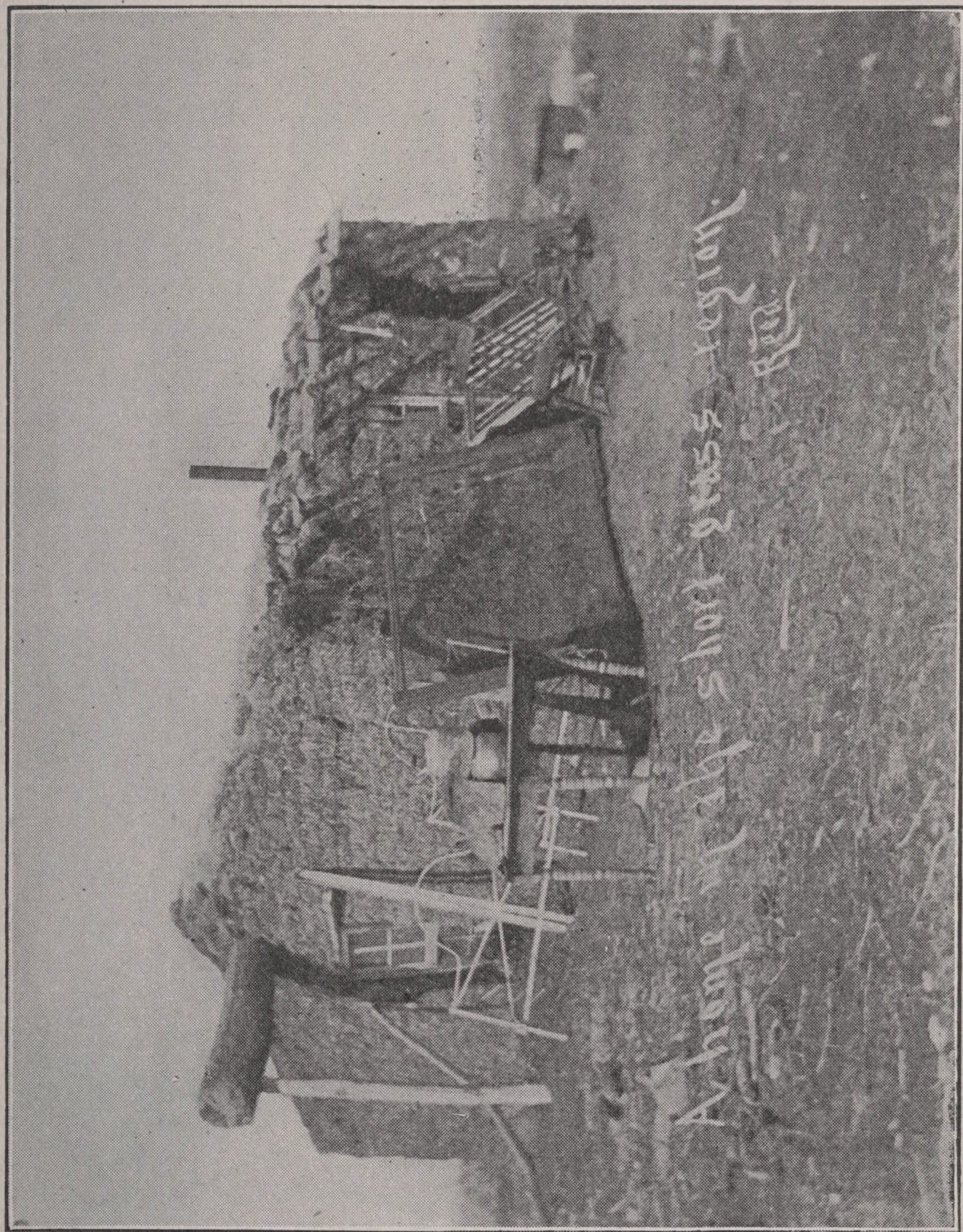
All his past life came up before him. Oh, how he wished he had known before that he was doing wrong and wasting his life! He had not meant to be wicked, for no one had taught him any better.

He reached in his pocket to get a chew of tobacco. Suddenly it became disgusting to him. He had heard once that it was a filthy habit and it surely was. Why had he wasted so much time and money for it? He never would taste the horrid stuff again.

Then he thought of the whiskey that he had drunk. A few scenes came to his mind when he had been under its influence and he shuddered. Never again would he touch that. In fact, John laid awake the greater part of the night thinking and wondering about what he had seen and heard.

He could hardly wait until the next night came when he could go and hear more of this beautiful story. And night after night he went, each time seeing himself more sinful and always deciding to never repeat any of his past sins.

He had decided that this was the right way to live and that he could be as happy as those women were. So with all his heart he cried to God for help to live right. Oh! he was so sorry that he had done so many things that looked so dreadful to him now.



Home in the short grass region.

A SOD HOUSE NEAR JOHN'S HOME.

The life of a Christian was preached to the people night after night for nearly two weeks, but no invitation was yet given to seek and obtain it.

By this time John had fully made up his mind that he was going to live a different life. That he was going to be a man like the one God had created in the beginning—pure and holy. He understood that it was possible, and he longed for the time when they would ask him to come and get saved from his sins and would tell him how.

At last the time came. There was a long bench set out in front of the congregation. This they called an altar and said that any who wanted to serve the Lord might come forward.

John was all ready and longed to go, but he did not know what to do, whether to sit upon the altar or kneel down beside it; so he thought he would wait and see what the others did.

He did not have to wait long, for a girl in front of him went forward and knelt down. That was all he wanted to know and he hurried forward, too. Soon some of the boys who were with him followed his example and there were

a number of anxious seeking souls at the altar that night.

The invitation being over, the ministers knelt down at the altar and thanked God for his tender mercy that had been extended to a lost world and prayed that those at the altar might understand what true salvation was.

Then they carefully explained to each one what it meant to be redeemed from all sin, and how God looked upon the sin-cursed world so full of awful wickedness, and that he was so moved with tender love and compassion that he sacrificed the brightest gem of glory—even his only begotten Son—as a Redeemer for all who would believe on him and turn from their sins.

It was indeed a great price, but in this way he could prove his great love for mankind. The words were quoted, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” John 3:16, 17. Also, “The Son of man came

to seek and to save that which was lost.” Luke 19:10.

Oh, how sweet those words sounded to John! Fully awakened to his awful condition he was longing to know the way of deliverance.

One by one he recalled his past sins. Smoking and chewing tobacco, drinking beer and whiskey, stealing, lying, card playing, betting, gambling and many other things were bidden adieu forever. But one thing came to his mind that it seemed hard to give up—that was dancing.

He could not see that it was wrong to dance. He had taken so much pleasure in it, but if it was wrong he would give that up, too.

Very carefully it was then explained to him that it afforded pleasure for a season but that many harmful effects were sure to follow.

Some of the evils that are brought about by dancing were explained and John was surprised to know some things that it led to. He had always danced only for the mere pleasure of dancing, but he saw from what they said that it led to many evil practices. It was the means of many temptations to both boys and girls and

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often led to the loss of virtue. Another thing that he knew was true from experience was the effect it had upon the health. He could see that his poor health was due in many ways to dancing and late hours.

When John saw the evils connected with it, he was not long in placing it among the things he was giving up and by God's grace he decided never to dance again.

It was sweet to see John's simple faith after he had asked God to pardon all of his transgressions. He received a clear witness of his acceptance and was truly happy. He felt the deep, aching void within his heart fast being filled with the dear Savior's love.

From that time all could see that John's life was changed. The things he once loved he now took no part in. He was a new creature in Christ Jesus.

His companions who had gone to the altar with him went away rejoicing in the Lord and many others were saved from their sins during the remainder of the meeting.

John found that he had many wrongs to make right. But he gladly did this. Many confessed

when he came to them for forgiveness that they would be glad to have an experience like his.

As they looked at John now they wondered how it was that such a change could come over any one who had done so many wicked things. It was strange, but with God all things are possible.

By John's life we can see how much depends upon children's being rightly instructed while they are young. Many of the awful deeds that John committed willingly and in many instances planned, would never have even tempted him had he been taught aright, for he would have realized their dreadful nature and not allowed his mind to dwell upon them.

How well it was for him that he found out that he was a miserable sinner in God's sight and that he must forsake all of his evil ways and habits, and that he was willing to ask God to release him from the binding chains that Satan had bound about him.

Each sinful habit that he had formed had been a chain from which nothing but the power of God could release him.

Many people who give themselves over to

allow Satan's chains to bind them are not able or willing to be released. Such persons will not only live a life of sorrow here, but will spend eternity in suffering and torment.

When the meetings were ended life seemed so different. He could say with the poet,

“Life is real! life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.”

Every spare moment was spent in reading and studying God's Word. He soon procured a Bible for himself.

One day as he was reading in the 10th chapter of St. Mark his eyes rested upon the 14th and 15th verses, and he was surprised to see that instead of being a man he was only a little child in God's sight. What did it mean? He had expected to be a man, pure and holy, and had meant to live so that all might esteem him as a man of God.

Another time he read where Jesus thanked God that he had hidden his truth from the wise and prudent and had revealed it unto babes. He saw that his past life was wasted entirely. He must now commence anew.

This did not discourage him in the least, for he soon found many encouraging scriptures. The second chapter of Peter was especially a great help to him. In the second verse he found that his food was to be God's Word.

Another verse that made a deep impression upon his mind he found in 1 Cor. 13:11. It read, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

He determined to become a man just as soon as possible. He availed himself of every opportunity to do good to all mankind. This was no hardship, for John longed to do good and he saw many around him daily who were sadly in need of help.

John was now learning many things. He found by reading 1 Cor. 12th chapter that Christian people represented Christ's spiritual body here upon earth.

In Christ's natural body had been many members—hands, feet, eyes, ears, etc.—each doing a special, but different work. In the spiritual body these members were to carry on Christ's

work below while he went above to prepare for their hereafter.

The members could not all do the same kind of work in Christ's natural body; that is, his hands could not walk nor his ears see; just so the members in his spiritual body must do different classes of work. Some members were called to preach, some to teach, some to work miracles, and some to heal, and some to do other things; but they all worked together and in harmony because Christ was their head and directed them in every line of work. And God arranged every member in the body just as it pleased him.

None were to feel exalted or think they were more highly favored because they all drew their strength from the same source, Christ; and if one member suffered each other member would suffer with it.

John realized that he was now a member in Christ's body or church and he wanted to fill his office well. From the first he seemed to be called to teach others the way of salvation and about the goodness of the Lord.

A Sunday-school was started and he took his

place as a teacher of the infant class. But as he continued to read his Bible God unfolded so many things to him that he was often called upon to teach the Bible class.

At one time while reading in his Bible he chanced to turn to the 5th chapter of James. There in the 15th verse he read that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

This was true because God's word said so. but did it mean him? Yes, it must, for in another verse he read, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." It surely must mean him and he was certainly afflicted. His back pained him most of the time now.

He began to pray for his healing, for he felt that God's word was true. His healing was truly wonderful. God not only removed all pain from his back, but healed his lungs and made him straight and strong and he could say with the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."

Oh, how good the dear Lord had been to him! He never could cease praising him.

One day the old farmer for whom John had worked and in whose home he had first attended family worship sent for him to come and make him a visit. He wanted to have a little talk, as he had heard of John's wonderful conversion and of how earnest he was to help others.

John remembered with what fear and trembling he had left this house a few years before, but things were so different now. He was glad to tell any and all who would listen to him of his new life.

He told the whole story of his Christian experience, of how he had been convicted of his sins and then wonderfully delivered from them when he sought pardon; and also of the peace and joy he now had in the service of the Lord. It was an easy story for John to tell, and he soon saw that his listener was greatly interested in knowing what a wonderful change had taken place in his life.

The farmer rejoiced with him and urged him to become a minister, but John had already felt his calling on this line and was just waiting for the Lord to have his way with him.

At last John developed into a true-hearted

and noble man of God. He had the desire of his heart. He had no other motive in living only to please God who had done so much for him and who had enabled him to develop into the kind of a man he desired to be.

He gave his time entirely to the Lord's work and all who knew him could plainly see that he was what he had longed to be and what he had theretofore failed to be—a true man.

Conclusion.

In conclusion we may draw from John's life the fact that he could not become a man by indulging in evil habits. But as soon as he forsook these, the noble part of his character began to show itself and true manhood was developed.

Boys do not have to wait until they are grown to show forth a manly character. They can commence while they are very small and be real men by the good deeds they do and the way in which they shun evil company and temptation.

Some do this in their own strength, but it is a much better way to ask for God's strength and grace to help them. In this way they may be a help to all around them as John is now since he is a man.

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